

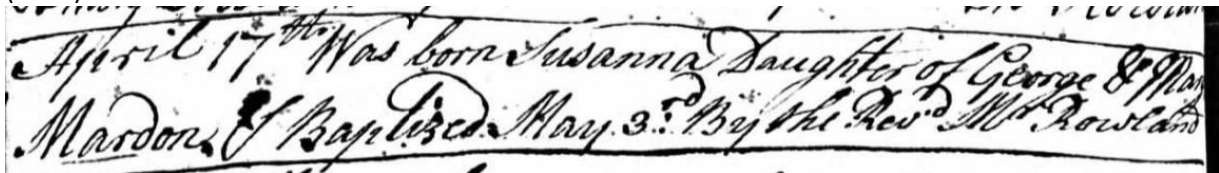
Memorial 14

'Sacred to the memory of Susanna wife of John Croot Who departed this life ? March 1830 Aged 35 years'¹

Susanna Croot, née Mardon was buried on 31 March 1830 aged 35 years.² A new grave was dug for her with 8 shillings being paid for it on the day of her burial.³

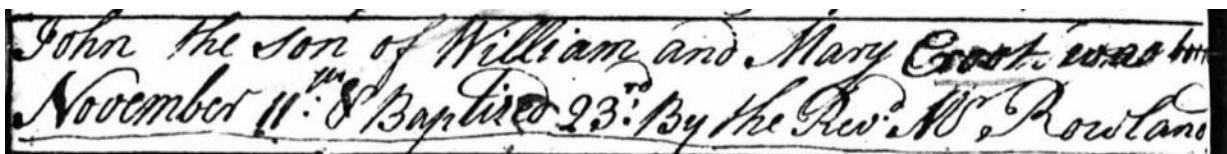
The 1894 transcription of the engraving on the stone in the graveyard reads, 'Susan wife of John Croot, formerly of Moreton, Tanner 28 March 1830. 35.'⁴ It is assumed that the inscription gives her date of death rather than burial and that W.H. Hamilton Rogers mis-transcribed her name.

She was born on the 17th of April 1795 to George and Mary Mardon in Moretonhampstead and baptised a few weeks later on the 3rd of May. The baptism was conducted by the Reverend Mr Rowlands at Cross Presbyterian Meeting, Moretonhampstead.⁵ She appears to have been one of six children born to George and Mary; Ann (1786), John (1788), George (1789), Betty (1792), Susanna (1795) and William (1798).



The Moretonhampstead records show two simultaneous families with parents called George and Mary Mardon, however the records differentiate in that one George (not Susanna's father) was a serge maker. The two corresponding weddings, George Mardon and Mary Davies/Davis occurred on the 20th of August 1786 whilst George Mardon the serge maker, married Mary Hillman on the 17th of October 1791.⁶ The first marriage is most likely that of Susanna's parents as Ann, Susanna's sister was born in November 1786.

John Croot, Susanna's husband, was born on the 11th of November 1794 also in Moretonhampstead to William and Mary Croot and was baptised on the 23rd of November.⁷ John had four siblings; William, Ann, Mary, and Dorcas. John and his future wife Susanna's baptismal entries are on the same page in the register and as their parents both worshipped at the Cross Presbyterian Meeting it is assumed that the two knew each other from an early age.



¹ 2014 Transcription of the headstone.

² Georges Meeting (Presbyterian) 1824-1837 burial register. Accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk.

³ Report and account book of Dissenters burial ground 1748-1832 (DRO3693D/0/B/1). Accessed at www.swheritage.org.uk.

⁴ 1894 Transcription by William Henry Hamilton Rogers. www.swheritage.org.uk.

⁵ Baptism Register, Moretonhampstead, Cross Meeting (Presbyterian) 1672-1836. accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk.

⁶ Moretonhampstead parish records accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk.

⁷ As note 5.

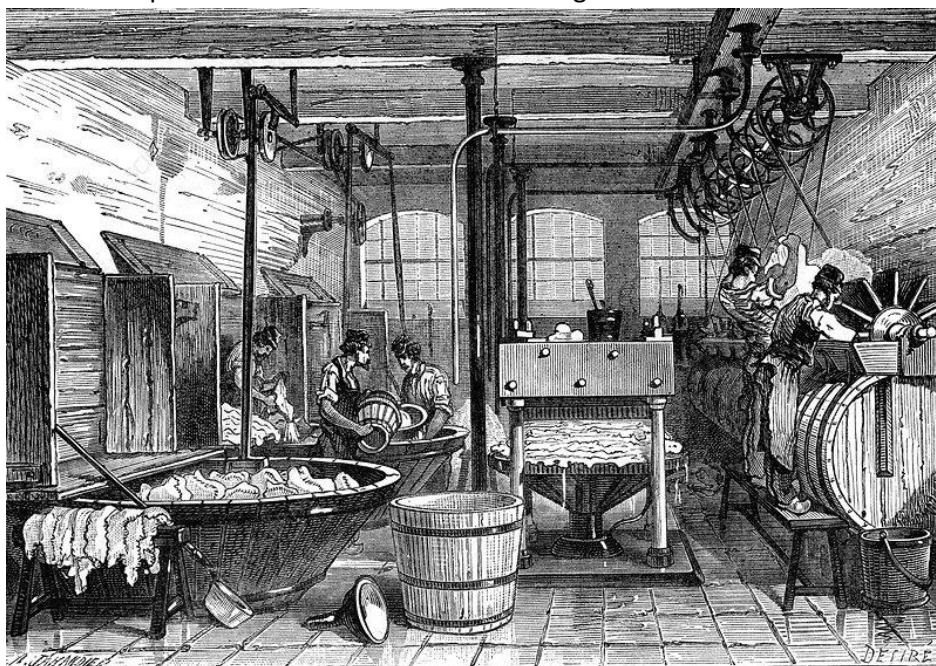
John Croot and Susanna Mardon were married on the 4th of August 1818 at Moretonhampstead.⁸ Ann and William Croot - possibly John's brother and sister - were witnesses.

John and Susanna may have had two children. The first, '*John Croote*' was born to a '*John and Susannah Croote*' on the 27th of May 1819 in Moretonhampstead and baptised on the 17th of October that year at Cross Meeting.⁹ George, who was born on the 19th of July 1821 was baptised on the 5th of August 1821 at Bow Meeting in Exeter.¹⁰ No further mention of John, the son, has been found. After their marriage in 1818 they may have lived in Moretonhampstead before moving to Exeter where George was born.

We know no more about Susanna's short life. The newspaper notice of her death with her mis spelt surname does not tell us much except that she would be missed; "*On Sunday last, much regretted, aged 35, Mrs Crout, of St Mary Steps.*"¹¹

John remarried, just a few months after her death, on the 19th of October 1830 to Ann Hepper at St. Mary Major, Exeter.¹² It is not known whether Ann was a spinster or a widow at the time of her marriage; John is also not listed as a widower.

In the 1841 Census returns, John and his second wife were living with George the son of John and Susanna in Commercial Road Exeter.¹³ It is not known whether John and Susanna had also been living in the same place before she died. The burial register mentions that she was from St. Mary Steps which



is the parish in which Commercial Road is located, so it is possible.¹⁴ John was listed as a journeyman tanner and George aged twenty a journeyman currier.¹⁵

Tanning is one of the processes used to treat animal skins to produce leather. When John Croot was working, the process involved repeated soaking and steeping in Tannic Acid produced from Oak bark

before the currier took over to finish the process; stretching, applying dressings, finishes and

⁸ Moretonhampstead Marriage Register, 1813 – 1837. Accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk.

⁹ As note 5.

¹⁰ Georges Meeting (Presbyterian) 1687-1823 Baptism and Burial Register. Accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk.

¹¹ Woolmer's Exeter and Plymouth Gazette, Saturday April 3 1830 accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk.

¹² St Mary Major Parish Register accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk.

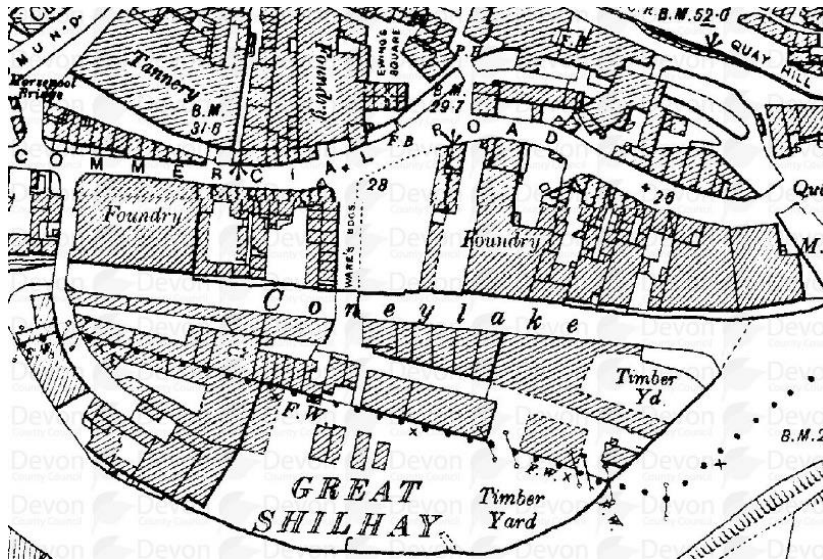
¹³ 1841 census accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk.

¹⁴ <https://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/DEV/Exeter/ParishMap> accessed 16/03/2021.

¹⁵ A journeyman is a skilled person who has completed an official apprenticeship. They were employed rather than working for themselves.

colouring to make the tanned hide strong, flexible, and waterproof.¹⁶ It was pungent, hard manual labour. Commercial Road's nearness to Coney Lake and two leats, suited manufacturers that needed water such as foundries and tanneries.¹⁷ With these and other related industries such as bone mills and candle factories the area was soon regarded as one of the most unpleasantly smelly areas in Exeter.

In 1843, Mr Frederick Tanner left in his will 'to my foreman John Croote the sum of ffifty pounds provided he shall have conducted himself honestly and be in my employ as such at the time of my decease'.¹⁸ Frederick Tanner was in 1839 listed as a tanner and wool stapler and in 1844 after his death Pigot's Directory, lists Frederick Tanner (executors of) tanners and fellmongers, Commercial Road.¹⁹ We know from later newspaper reports that Frederick Tanner's tan yard was eventually taken over by Tremlett and Wilson, at the end of Commercial Road.²⁰



Ordnance Survey map 1904.

After his death Frederick Tanner's depot for storing his oak bark at Flowerpots on the Okehampton Road was to let.²¹ Did John Croote continue working for Mr Tanner after the writing of his will and after his death?

In 1851 John and Ann were still living in the area at 14 Commercial Road.²² He was listed as a Fellmonger, (a dealer in hides or skins, particularly sheepskins, who might also prepare the skins for tanning).²³

In the *Exeter Pocket Journal and Almanack* of 1857, John was listed as a Tanner in Commercial Road.²⁴

By the 1861 census they had moved a short distance to Hawkers Cottages also in the Commercial Road.²⁵ Although John was 66, he was still listed as a Journeyman Tanner. Ann died in September 1864. The report in the paper stated that on "Sept. 14, at Commercial Road, Exeter, Ann, wife of Mr John Croote, aged 70."²⁶ Her death certificate stated that cause of death was by falling down the stairs resulting in

¹⁶ The 'Art and Mystery' of the Currier, S. Drummond, 1995.

¹⁷ <http://www.irenesutton.co.uk/Info/History/Currier.pdf> accessed 18/03/2021.

¹⁸ <http://www.exetermemories.co.uk/em/streets/commercial.php>.

¹⁹ Frederick Tanner, Merchant of Colleton Crescent, Exeter Will, 1843 (PROB 11/1981/310) accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk.

²⁰ Robson's Directory 1839 and Pigot's 1844 accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk.

²¹ 'The Dominicals Raid', The Western Times Friday October 30 1874 accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk.

²² The Western Times; Exeter Saturday August 12 1843 accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk.

²³ 1851 census accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk.

²⁴ <https://www.definitions.net/definition/fellmonger> accessed 17/03/2021.

²⁵ 'The Exeter Pocket Journal and Almanack for 1857' R. J. Trewman and Co.

²⁶ 1861 census accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk.

²⁷ The Western Times; Exeter Friday September 16, 1864 accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk

contusion and compression to the brain.²⁷ An inquest was held on the 16th of September by Henry Wilcocks Hooper the city coroner at The Bishop Blaize Inn.²⁸ It was assumed she had a fainting fit which caused her to fall and she died a couple of days later.²⁹

John moved to Teignmouth, presumably to be near his son. He died on the 5th of December 1868. His death was recorded in Fore Street, Teignmouth at the age of seventy-four by Ann Potter, a nurse, who was present at his death.³⁰

In his Will John left everything he had to George, and should George die before his wife to her in trust for his grandchildren.³¹

George Croot and family

The 1841 census showed that George followed his father into the leather trade, presumably working with his father.

In 1846 he married Martha Slocombe at the parish church of St. Olaves on the 18th of July.³² Martha was the daughter of Thomas Slocombe, a Butcher, and his wife Mary who lived in Butchers Row in Saint Olave's Parish in Exeter. By 1851 George and Martha had moved to Fore Street in Teignmouth and had two sons John aged three and George aged one.³³

They had a total of six children, all born in Teignmouth. John (1848-1919), George (1850-1927), Susan (1851-1949), Martha (1854-1930), Dorcas Ann (1859-1940) and Lois Emma (1863-1938).

In *Slater's Directory* of 1852 George was listed as a Currier and leather cutter. In all the census returns 1851, 1861, 1871 and 1881, George was recorded as a currier. By 1889 he was listed in *Kelly's Directory* as a Boot and Shoemaker and after his death in the 1891 census Martha's business is listed as 'Boot Warehouse'. At some point they must have expanded or had they been making boots and shoes for some time?

When George died in 1890 at the age of sixty-nine the newspaper reported "*We regret to have to record the passing away of another sturdy Liberal by the death of Mr George Croot of Teignmouth..... Born in Exeter and growing up to man's estate during the stirring times of 1832, and of the Corn League formation, he was trained in that hardy hearty school of politicians which led by the then editor of the Western Times did so much to form the opinions of the West of England and to aid in the bringing about of reforms the benefits of which we now enjoy. He had lived at Teignmouth for many years as a respected tradesman, where his honest, genial face will be missed.*"³⁴

Martha died five years later, on the 10th of December 1895 at the age of seventy-two at their home, 12 Fore Street, Teignmouth.³⁵

²⁷ Death certificate obtained from www.gov.co.uk

²⁸ The Bishop Blaize Inn is still extant on Commercial Road next to Cricklepit Mill.

²⁹ Trewman's Exeter Flying Post, September 21, 1864 accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk

³⁰ As note 28.

³¹ John Croot Will, probate date 21 Jan 1869 accessed via www.gov.co.uk

³² St Olaves marriage register accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk

³³ 1851 census accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk

³⁴ The Western Times, Wednesday, June 4, 1890 accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk

³⁵ The Western Morning News December 12 1895 accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk.

Martha, Dorcas Ann, and Lois Emma never married. In 1881 Lois was an *'apprentice to a fancy wool worker'* however by the 1891 census she was a shop assistant, presumably in the Boot warehouse run by the family. Perhaps after her father died, they needed her in the family business. However, she gained her Government Certificate in 1892 from Teignmouth School of Science and Art. She was commended for her drawing.³⁶

The three sisters continued with the manufacture of Boots and Shoes trading as Misses M. D and L. Croot at 12 Fore Street in Teignmouth up until at least 1910.³⁷

Of the other siblings, John had a mixed profession, starting out as a leather salesman and ending as a Schools Board attendance officer, moving about the country. George junior eventually moved to Bristol and became a draper. Susan married a draper and moved to Totnes.³⁸

A Amosford

May 2021



Memorial 14 (Croot) is unusual - a limestone headstone with a rounded top and decorated quarter circular shoulders.

³⁶ In 1885 the South Kensington Institute of Science and Art was established in Orchard Gardens Teignmouth.

³⁷ Kelly's Directory accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk.

³⁸ Census returns accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk.